

Maine State Library Special Collections



The Maine State Library has always had as one of its primary purposes the acquisition of books and materials about Maine and books by Maine authors. State and town histories, as well as family histories, are well represented in the general collection. The special collections listed below add considerable depth to the library's holdings of Maine materials.

Maine Author Collection

On permanent display in the Maine Room is the Maine Author Collection of more than 10,000 volumes. This collection contains an outstanding representation of works of Maine authors, including those of Madame Sarah Wood of York (1759-1853) Maine's first woman novelist; the complete works of Jacob Abbott (1803-1879) of Hallowell, a pioneer writer of books for children; the historical writings of Jacob's brother John S.C. Abbott (1805-1877), as well as the fiction of two prolific writers of stories for boys, Elijah Kellogg (1813-1901) and James Otis Kaler (1848-1912). Also included are the works of contemporary authors, such as Kenneth Roberts, Stephen King and Carolyn Chute.

The idea of a Maine Author Collection originated with Henry Dunnack, a former State Librarian, who in the 1920's began to collect the literary works of Maine authors. For the purpose of this collection, a Maine author is broadly defined to include not only Maine natives but also those who have become Maine residents, or part-time residents and authors writing about Maine. A unique file of correspondence with many of the authors adds to the value and interest of the collection, as do inscriptions in many of the books.

Baxter Collection

The Baxter Collection includes the personal papers, letters, and scrapbooks left to the Maine State Library by former Governor Percival Proctor Baxter (1876-1969). Subjects emphasized are Maine state government, conservation, and the history and development of Baxter State Park. The collection has its own special catalog as well as a printed guide on its use.

Percival Proctor Baxter was Governor of Maine (1921- 1925), a conservationist, and a preserver of Maine's mountains and forests through his gifts of the lands which now comprise Baxter State Park.

Avery Collection

The Avery Collection is an outstanding collection of materials, gathered by the late Captain Myron H. Avery, relating to the Katahdin area and lumbering in northern Maine. The collection consists of paintings by George Hallowell along with pamphlets, slides, negatives and photographs covering the years 1876-1936. Among those contributing photographs to the collection were Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, Edward Draper, George Hallowell and the National Park Service. The collection also includes a large number of maps of the Katahdin and Northern Maine area, and a chronological arrangement of Avery's correspondence.

Captain Myron Avery (1899-1952) was born in Lubec, Maine. He followed a career in the U.S. Navy. His avocation was the out-of-doors and mountain climbing. He was the first president of the Appalachian Trail Conference and an enthusiastic developer of the Appalachian Trail in Maine.

Thomas Bird Mosher Publications

From 1894 to 1926, the internationally known publisher Thomas Bird Mosher (1852-1923) of Portland collected and published poetry and prose selections representing little known masterpieces from world literature. The publications of the Mosher Press were distinguished by their fine quality imported paper, typography, and layout. The State Library has a complete set of the Mosher Series.

Manuscripts

The State Library has several thousand manuscripts, including Maine history, biography, personal papers, genealogies, and diaries. This collection also includes copies of deeds, surveys, vital records, legal and business papers, and letters.

Maps

The map collection includes state, county, city and town, regional, and special maps of Maine. Among these are an 1802 map of Maine by Osgood Carleton, the Moses Greenleaf (1777-1834) maps of Maine, maps of fourteen counties circa 1860, and a set of maps of the Northeastern Boundary controversy.

Maine Newspapers

The cities and towns of Maine are well-represented in the Maine State Library's collection of current newspapers.

Prior years of the principal Maine newspapers are available on microfilm, including such important early newspapers as the Bangor Daily Whig and Courier (1836-1900); Eastern Argus (1803-1921); and Le Messager (1880-1968), a French newspaper published in Lewiston. The library also has original copies of some older Maine newspapers.

Maine Vertical File and Kennebec Journal Index

In 1927, the Maine State Library started a clipping file of newspaper and magazine articles about Maine history, people and many other aspects of life in Maine. These clippings, along with pamphlets about Maine and her people, are arranged by subject in the Maine Vertical File. There is also a set of scrapbooks on various Maine topics.

From 1972 through 1994, the Library also created an index to significant Maine news in the Augusta newspaper, Kennebec Journal.

Town Reports

In 1892 the State Librarian wrote to every town in Maine and requested a complete file of the town's financial reports. This was the beginning of an extensive collection of town reports maintained by the Library. Maine law now requires that reports be filed with the Library annually. The Library also has substantial holdings of city directories and a complete collection of Maine Registers dating back to 1820.

Maine State Government Publications

From its earliest days, the Maine State Library has maintained a depository collection of Maine state government publications. These include departmental annual reports (some dating back to the early 1800's), state budget information, business and economic statistics, legislative committee reports, and historical records such as the Adjutant General's reports from the Civil War and World War I.

Aroostook Oral History

In 1971 the Aroostook County libraries received a federal grant for the development of an oral history of the county. The project was completed in 1972 and resulted in over 100 audio cassettes, some of which are in French and Swedish. The cultural life and history of Aroostook County are presented through personal reminiscences of senior citizens, folk songs, and folk tales. These tapes are available for loan.